Panchayati Raj

OCTOBER 1960

PANCHAYATI RAJ

(Incorporating Gram Sevak)

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GLIMPSES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

VIDUR

'PANCHAYATI RAJ', like life itself is on the move, sometimes forward and sometimes backward. The progress in either direction depends on the environment, the spirit, the skill and efficiency of the local people, including the officials and non-officials.

DELHI RURAL AREA

Sitting in the Capital, as one looks around, a feeling of depression overtakes one. Panchayati Raj in the 300 and odd villages of the Union territory has not made satisfactory progress during the last 10 months. It is understood that group rivalries and party factions have come to the fore as a result of the elections. The riots let loose by the election took a toll of 6 human lives. The Panchayats were expected to take charge of 60,000 acres of common land. The objective is yet to be realised. On the other hand, an unhealthy race for unauthorised occupation of the common village land has begun. And the pity is that some of the newly elected panches and their relatives are reported to have a hand in promoting this illegal activity. In this drama of the "survival of the fittest", the Harijans and the weaker sections feel that they have gone to the wall. Their grievance is that the powerful landed section, has already parcelled out all available surplus 'abadi' lands between themselves leaving little or no land for the former to build their houses upon. Here is a real problem. The Harijans and other landless labourers have been dragging on their existence all these past years in crowded insanitary hutments rather hovels. And if there are any people who need to add even a few yards of housing accommodation, it is they. The recent earthquake and floods have aggravated the situation still further. A number of the existing houses have cracked and collapsed. It is the most opportune time for speeding up the distribution of housing loans.

The Panchayats in Delhi are not yet fully in the saddle to undertake the planning and execution of development schemes. They have scanty resources of their own. They have neither started collecting the taxes authorised to them, nor have they been advanced any grant or financial assistance by the Administration, so far. Surprisingly, they have also not been delegated the power to execute local development works.

The Delhi Administration is, no doubt, alive to the situation and it has recently taken some steps to remove the difficulties of the Panchayats. But the case is somewhat complicated. The Delhi rural area is, properly speaking, not a rural area. It is included in the Corporation. Besides, there being far too many authorities and administrative organisations, their functions are often overlapping, resulting in avoidable red-tapism and delay.

IN RAJASTHAN

Coming to Rajasthan, the experience is different. One cannot help marvelling how this state once so backward and given over to feudalism, has at one leap taken to democracy and is in the vanguard of the new 'Operation Panchayati Raj'. It is interesting to note that the 232 panchayat samities have discussed the schemes under the proposed Third Five Year Plan. These are now in turn being examined by the Zilla Parishads, some of which have already completed the job. It is difficult to say anything about the quality of the work done by them. But it is clear that for the first time 30,000 villages of Rajasthan and for that matter of any state in India have been involved in the process of discussion and planning. Every village there has now got some exercise in carrying out survey, formulating the felt needs, assessing the resources and fixing the targets of achievement.

Another solid gain has been the assumption of responsibility by the Panchayats to create their own internal resources to match the Government assistance for execution of various schemes. The hopes pinned on

TEMPTATION

Panchayati Raj are thus beginning to be realised. A look at the Plan prepared by the Jaipur Zilla Parishad is there to convince even the most sceptic. Seventeen samities of this district have offered to contribute Rs. 285 lakhs towards the Plan which is almost equal to the amount likely to be passed on to the local bodies by the Government departments.

It had been wisely laid down that the local institutions will have perfect freedom to formulate their own plans, in order of priority they themselves decide in the context of the local conditions. This was done not without some misgiving and mental reservation. It had been argued at that time that there would be trouble in case the Panchayats did not fall in line with the National Development Council's general policy, say of treating food production on top priority basis. But the soundness of the judgment of the rural folk stands vindicated once again as a cursory glance at the Panchayat Samiti Plans would bear out. On the whole, they have given pride of place to agriculture and Animal Husbandry. In fact, there has been a general complaint from them of shortage of funds earmarked for minor irrigation works. In Jaipur district the department had recommended only two bunds to be built. But the various Samities have pointed out two dozens places where bunds could be raised.

IN ANDHRA

The Andhra Pradesh Government has recently taken a commendable step in transferring functions related to Social Welfare in respect of Scheduled castes, and Backward classes to the Zilla Parishads along with the staff and funds. This is bound to result in greater coordination of Social Welfare activities at the block level. This will also satisfy the aspirations of a large mass of people. Another important step that the State Government has taken is the transferring of the maintenance of Minor Irrigation sources as a result of which about 53,000 tanks are being handed over to Panchayat Samitis in Samiti Blocks and to Zilla Parishads in Non-samiti Blocks.

FUNDS UNSPENT

It is distressing to note that in spite of highest priority being given to agriculture, funds earmarked for that purpose remain unspent in some of the states. The Deputy Minister, Community Development, Bihar, speaking at a meeting of Block Development Committees regretfully pointed out that bulk of the funds allotted to Blocks for the development of agriculture remained unspent. It is high time that strict measures were taken to cut down red-tapism and remove the lethargy of the personnel concerned if these have been standing in the way of progress.

COOPERATION

The subject of cooperation was recently under fire in the Rajya Sabha. The main charge was that the progress in this field has been slow and halting. The defects pointed out by various speakers included those of inadequacy of loans advanced to the villagers in general and the weaker sections in particular, of the loans being misused, of party politics and favouritism, of too much control exercised by the official machinery and the law being cumbersome and defective.

Criticism against the working of the present Cooperatives was voiced outside the Parliament as well. A sample survey undertaken on behalf of the Reserve Bank into the pattern of utilisation of medium term Cooperative Credit to farmers revealed that 50 per cent of the loans had been utilised for non-agricultural purposes. At a meeting of the Punjab legislators attended by the Union Deputy Minister for Community Development and Cooperation, a member deplored the "trend to treat Service Cooperatives as executive clubs of land owning farmers. Other villagers including artisans and Harijans should be actively associated with the Service Cooperatives,", he said. During the same meeting, a number of members disclosed that several contractors were working in the guise of labour Cooperatives in nine out of fourteen districts of Punjab. Stressing the imperative need for simplification and democratising the existing Cooperative law,

(Continued on page 12)

The Lady Who Became Sarpanch

Who said, "Our Villagers, particularly women, are backward and unfit to shoulder the responsibilities of the Panchayati Raj ?" Perhaps a cynic—one who sees good nowhere ! If you are still taken in by the cynic's arguments, then go and visit village Madangir only 12 miles from the capital of India and meet lady Sarpanch Shrimati Kaushalya Sharma and I am sure you will have a new understanding and a new vision. You will return a convert.

Kaushalya Sharma came into lime light because of her being the only lady Sarpanch elected during the recent Panchayat elections of Delhi rural area. And if for nothing else, just because of this, one would think she is rather extraordinary. But nothing can be farther from truth. She is just a village woman like hundreds and thousands of her sisters in the countryside. She has received formal education up to VIIIth standard only. She does not observe purdah that unfortunately most of the village women still do. She mixes freely and with self-confidence amongst the men folk of the village. This is no doubt a remarkable achievement on her part since in the father-in-law's village it requires great courage to discard the numerous social taboos. Her simple and unassuming ways are a far cry from the sophisticated airs of city bred women who visit villages for social service.

She leads a happy family life. She has four sons studying in different classes. Her husband is a Government servant who works in an office in Delhi and cycles home every day. She is full of admiration for her husband who fully cooperates in all her public activities. In fact she has inspired him to take ever-increasing part in social service. He is now the Secretary of the village Cooperative Society and as Mrs. Sharma says with pride, "With rolled sleeves and spade in hand, he follows me for taking part in 'Shramdan'."

Smt. Sharma is thus a typical village woman preoccupied with her family life. And if she could take interest in public activities and become the Sarpanch of a village, why cannot thousands of other village women like her come forward and participate in the Panchayati Raj in action ? This thought raised in me great expectation of a bright future for the Panchayati Raj.

I was naturally eager to discover Smt. Sharma's secret of success so that the same could be followed with advantage by other village women, too. Smt. Sharma thought the spirit of social service was inborn in her and that she had shown signs of it even in her early childhood. This may be true. But somehow I was not satisfied. I went on pursuing the quest.

"What is the public work that has interested you most ?", I asked. Smt. Sharma immediately replied, "Tank excavation." She took me outside the village and pointed out the tank which had been recently excavated through her initiative. The huge tank, set amidst a grove of tall trees, was one of the most impressive and picturesque ones I have ever seen in the countryside. Smt. Sharma told me how she had been instrumental in its excavation year after year. Eyes sparkling with emotion, she narrated how in the blazing noon of the mid-summer, with spade in hand she worked alone, sometimes with just a few children to keep her company. But there was hardly any man or woman in the village who did not turn up in the long run to participate in the 'Shramdan'. She has already got one 'ghat' paved, and her future plans are to strengthen the embankments of the tank. "What work did you undertake for the first time in the village ?" I next inquired. "It was the retrieving of the samadhi of Baba Harsukh Das—a saint held in high esteem by the villagers?" she said. The samadhi

had in course of time got buried under a heap of earth. With the help of women folk, she got the earth removed and built a cemented platform around it. The place is now used for 'satsang'. The villagers gather there every evening and offer Bhajans and prayers to the Almighty. Smt. Sharma is a highly religious lady and she holds daily concourse of village women to recite holy books like the Ramayana and the Gita.

Baba Harsukh Das, the village saint, it seems got pleased and showered his blessings on Smt. Sharma, who thence onward rose high in the esteem and popularity of the villagers. She came to be looked upon as their leader and was consulted on all matters affecting the village. Her interest in public activities also grew. From purely religious and cultural activities, she now began to participate in all other welfare and development activities. The education of the children and the welfare of women now began to claim her attention. It was through her efforts that the building of a Primary school was constructed. The villagers contributed about Rs. 10,000 in cash, kind and labour for it. A welfare centre, meant for women and children, being run by the Social Welfare Board also claims her attention a good deal. She got all the village streets paved by the villagers themselves without depending on any matching contribution from the Government.

As a result of these public activities, Smt. Sharma endeared herself to the villagers so much that they unanimously selected her to be their Sarpanch during the recent Panchayat elections. She is happy and proud of the distinction conferred on her by the villagers. She said, "I have now devoted all my time to the service of the village community and am prepared to do anything for the good of my fellow villagers." Speaking about her Panchayat activities, she said, "Immediately on becoming Sarpanch, the first and foremost task that I have done is to obtain clear-cut demarcation of the village common land. We have got fixed pacca 'burjies' so that the common land may not be encroached by any individual farmer." This work is the first of its kind undertaken by the newly elected Panchayats in Delhi so far. "The Government has given top priority to increasing food production. What are you doing in this respect," I asked. Smt. Sharma replied, "we have not overlooked this important work. Our greatest handicap is lack of adequate irrigation water. We have deep wells having saline water, which is however good for crops. If we get electricity, we would instal pumping sets to lift more water from the wells. We could then have two or even three crops. We are already growing sugarcane where there is adequate water supply. At present we are having one crop only due to shortage of irrigation water."

Continuing, Smt. Sharma told me about the village cooperative which has a share capital of Rs. 10,000 and deposits amounting to Rs. 15,000. It was heartening to note that here was a society capable of attracting such large deposits. If other societies could do the same, the problem of financing them would be solved and the foundations of the cooperative movement will be truly and well laid. But one thing that saddened me was the ineffective use to which the society was being put to. Apart from giving loans, it does precious little. It could easily be converted into a service cooperative. From all what I saw, I carried the impression that here was all the basic material needed for making Panchayati Raj a success—a good Panchayat, a sound Cooperative, a keen and devoted Sarpanch in whom the villagers have implicit faith. What is needed is proper technical guidance by the Block staff. Perhaps that will also not be found wanting.

What is true of Madangir, I am sure, is true of so many other villages. There is no dearth in the countryside of basic sound material and human resources. There is nothing unique or extraordinary about Smt. Sharma being a village Sarpanch. Thousands of other women can aspire to become Pradhans and Sarpanches if only they follow in her footsteps. The secret of her success is simple. Remain loyal

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LEGISLATORS DISCUSS COOPERATION

The Rajya Sabha discussed on August 12 and 26, 1960 the subject of progress of Cooperative movement in the country. The occasion was provided by Shri Bhupesh Gupta, M.P. who moved a Resolution for appointing a Committee to enquire into and report on the causes for the slow progress of the movement. The debate evoked considerable interest and a number of members belonging to various parties spoke for and against the Resolution. The Minister for Community Development and Cooperation pleaded for the Resolution to be withdrawn. This was, however, not done. The request not being acceded to, the Resolution was put up to vote and was lost.

THE SHADES

The members pointed out several defects and shortcomings. According to Shri Bhupesh Gupta, the progress of the cooperative movement had been considerably slow and that the Government had not fulfilled the expectations it had raised particularly in respect of supply of adequate credit and cooperative farming. He also pointed out that the cooperative law is very harsh and unsuitable and that it had not been changed even though the Prime Minister himself has expressed himself in favour of such a change.

Shri M. S. Gurupada Swamy drew pointed attention to mismanagement, favouritism and corruption prevailing in the societies. He pointed out that there was a large chain of political brokers whose business is only to take a share or to pinch something from the loans granted to these poor people. Shri M. R. Shervani pointed out the existence of party-politics and favouritism in the cooperatives. Speaking from personal experience, he remarked, "I wanted to start a cooperative store for catering to the needs of my labour in one of my factories at Allahabad. I worked at it for about two years and ultimately gave it up in frustration and disgust because I could not get that store registered with the Registrar of Cooperative Societies". He regretted that the societies are so official ridden that "These are reduced to the status of rubber stamps". Shri Sudhir Ghosh pleaded for relaxation of official control over the cooperatives and suggested that authority should be delegated to the federations of various cooperative societies. Dr. A. Subba Rao referring to the inadequacy of credit supplies to the peasants, pointed out that it was lack of security of tenure and land reform that came in the way of progress of the cooperative movement.

BRIGHT PATCHES

So much about the shades. But there were bright patches too. Shri M. S. Gurupada Swamy pointed out that the cooperative movement had made good progress, quantitatively as well as qualitatively during the last few years and therefore, there was no occasion to feel despondent and frustrated. Shri N. R. Malkani thought that the cooperative societies had made so much progress during the two Five Year Plan periods that the statistics of achievement placed before them were "too good to be believed". Referring to the great improvement in the system of advancing loans to farmers, he related his own experience of societies functioning in Rajasthan where loans were being given in kind instead of cash. He narrated how the Panchayats and Cooperatives were working in coordination with each other. He said if any farmer needed anything, say improved seed, it was put down on paper with the signature of the man in charge of the society there and immediately it was taken to the Sarpanch who was very near the place. After the Sarpanch had countersigned that it was a genuine demand, the person taking a cart went to the Block Headquarters. Then the Pradhan who is one of their own men countersigned it and the farmer got the material the same day.

Shri S. D. Mishra, Parliamentary Secretary quoted statistics to show that the cooperative societies had

made satisfactory progress. According to him, the number of societies stood at 1,80,000 out of which only 34,000 worked at a loss. The membership of the societies now stood at 17 millions, thus exceeding the target for Second Plan by 2 millions; the loans advanced would be of the order of 190 crores, thus achieving 95% of the target, and the number of processing societies 379, achieving a rise in the target by more than hundred per cent at the end of the Second Plan.

FIRST PHASE

Shri S. K. Dey, Union Minister for Cooperation, while replying to the debate outlined three-phased planning programme for the cooperatives. In the short-term planning, he said, importance had been attached to expansion of credit and in this success had been achieved to the extent envisaged at the beginning of the Second Plan. He added that the functions of the cooperative had been diversified and that "from a mere money-lending organisation this had been converted into a multipurpose cooperative which will look after the entire requirements of the villagers, be it in the matter of distribution of seeds, of fertilisers, of insecticides, or iron and steel, of kerosene, of cement or other requisites of the farmers."

SECOND PHASE

The Minister explained that under the second phase or the medium term planning, emphasis had been laid on training. He said, "If cooperation has to grow as a mode of life dealing with the economic activities of the village people, in particular, it is necessary that proper understanding of cooperation should travel all along the line down to the village. For this purpose, there has been considerable expansion of training facilities all along the line for both officials as well as non-officials."

Speaking about the necessity of relaxing the official control on Cooperatives, Shri S. K. Dey said, "We want very fast relaxation but there can be no vacuum in a system of this nature. The control can be relaxed only to the extent that there are corresponding organisations of cooperatives which are prepared to exercise this control." He detailed the various steps that had been taken to facilitate the relaxation of official control. He said that efforts were being made to develop federations of different types of cooperatives from the ground up to the national level to whom supervisory and organisational functions now carried on by the Government might be passed on.

Regarding the Reports of the Committees on cooperative farming and cooperative credit, he informed the House that these were being examined by the Government and decisions would be taken shortly. He said, "When these recommendations are implemented, a new life shall begin pulsating both in the credit structure of the country as also in the cooperative farming." He said that the weaker sections will no longer remain deprived of credit facilities. With regard to cooperative farming, he made it clear that the movement would be entirely voluntary.

THIRD PHASE

The third phase or the long term planning of the cooperative movement, visualised that if cooperation were to become a law of life, it should percolate into every fibre of the society. "To achieve this" he said, "We must begin with cooperation from the children and, therefore, we have already taken steps to introduce cooperation as a subject in schools, colleges and universities." He explained that it was on practice rather than theory, that emphasis was being placed. He said that cooperative stores were being introduced in schools, colleges, universities and training institutions so that the trainees learnt to manage these themselves.

THE LADY WHO BECAME SARPANCH

(Continued from page 5)

to the cultural and religious traditions thereby win the confidence of the villagers. Once the women take charge of the Panchayats, most of the present difficulties and problems would disappear. Like the Madangir village Panchayat, these will become free from disputes and party factions, leading to peace and progress.

TWO

From Gramsevak to Farmer's Son

Dear Farmer's Son,

The stupendous responsibility of national reconstruction has been through various stages such as C. D., and the N. E. S. and at all stages you have been actively participating in this mighty re-orientation and one will not be surprised but will only be pleased should you be called upon to occupy higher offices. Therefore, I venture to think that, by means of this letter, I can place before you some of my experiences in the very same field in which I have been working in my humble capacity as a Gram Sevak since 1-7-1950. Though I felt like frankly expressing my varied experiences—at times sweet and at others bitter—as a Government servant, I always restrained by ambition. In fact, before this, I had written only one article which was published in one paper in October, 1954 under the title "Villagers are awakened".

Even as a Gram Sevak, I have been proud of whatever little we have achieved towards forging a casteless and classless society. This is a mighty task. Comparatively, we have not done much. That I admit straightaway. All the same, I have been legitimately proud of this scheme for the following reasons :—

1. The Gram Sevak has earned the affection and sympathy of the villager, particularly because in the hierarchy of officials it is only he who aproaches the villagers and in turn is approachable at all needy times.

2. Though we have not done all that is required, we have at least provided the basic amenities for the villagers.

3. In the actual implementation of the programme for establishing a Welfare State, what little progress has been made by the Government, has been done through us alone.

The Gram Sevak is to borrow your own expression placed between "threatening orders from superiors and the cold attitude of the villagers." Do you consider, Sir, apart from verbal aid, is there anyone who offers a helping hand to the Gram Sevak or other members of the staff at any time, any where ? I humbly place my real difficulty before you.

The other problem relates to recruitment, appointment and promotion of the staff. All is not well here. With respect to university education, I sincerely feel an undergraduate or a matriculate with actual experience of field work is more qualified to be a Block Development Officer than a graduate or a double graduate, raw from the University without much experience of the field. It would be better if the Public Service Commission delegates this power to the Department alone. Zeal and passion for service should outweigh university diplomas. Red-tapism is the barrier which we should break in matters of dealing with villagers, and the graduates often tend to be technically accurate even at the high cost of losing touch with the peasants.

We are busy in developing an 'orchard'. But when the fruits are ripe, somebody else reaps them, and we are asked to console ourselves by adopting the message of the Gita—"the work should not be linked with the fruit as a necessary reward."

In matters of promotion, delays would be disastrous. Enthusiastic workers lose hope and even cross the age of an average Indian by the time they are vested with responsible offices—if at all. What is worse, some of the workers are driven to invoke extraneous help to go up. These tendencies should be discouraged and the honest worker should be afforded an opportunity to do his best for his mother land.

Every month, I receive the copy of your letter to the Development Commissioners and I thank you so much for that.

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LETTERS

From Farmer's Son to Gramsevak

Dear Friend,

I am glad to receive your letter. I would like you to write direct to your journal "Panchayati Raj". There should be free and frank discussion for it is only then that there can be proper understanding between workers at all levels. In fact our complaint has been that we hear far too little from our grassroot workers, particularly the Gram Sevaks, Panches, Pradhans and Pramukhs, about the various problems affecting us at all levels, particularly at the ground level.

I agree with you that the Gram Sevak occupies a very important position in our programme since he is the main ground level link between the officials and the non-officials. He has to bear a heavy burden of multifarious duties and responsibilities. The success of the Panchayati Raj depends to a large extent on the technical skill, sympathy and understanding which he can bring to bear on his relations with the villagers and their elected representatives. His stories of success or failure are of educative interest to one and all of us.

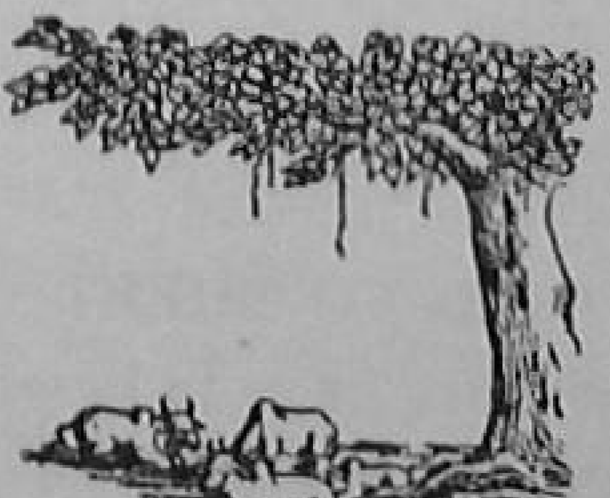
I also know that his task is a very difficult one. He has to face many a problem. No one should know better than he why a particular programme is not making headway. For instance, we have been trying for the last so many years to popularise the use of cowdung as compost rather than fuel. Yet the idea has not caught on. Why? The Gram Sevak and the Sarpanch should be able to point out the real bottlenecks that hamper the progress of the scheme. There are a number of similar practical difficulties which have been confronting the Gram Sevaks and the Sarpanches in their day-to-day work. We would like to share with them their thinking on these issues.

You have referred to one type of problem only which concerns the service conditions of the Gram Sevaks. The subject is not new and has been discussed before in more than one Conference of the Development Commissioners. The desirability of providing suitable opportunities for promotion of Gram Sevaks to higher posts has been well recognised. The Central Government has recommended to the State Governments that a definite quota of the available posts should be reserved for being filled in by promotion of V.L.Ws. Even at the last conference held at Srinagar, the matter again came up for discussion and it was recommended that selection grades should be created for such V.L.Ws. who have done outstanding work. The State Governments have been requested to act accordingly and except in three States where the question is still under consideration, all other States have made provision for promotion of Gram Sevaks. I know, a number of Gram Sevaks in various States have been promoted to Selection Grade or as extension officers and even as BDOs.

There is another scheme of far-reaching importance and that is to provide facilities of advanced education in agriculture and allied subjects to Gram Sevaks so that by obtaining qualifications, equivalent to a degree, they become eligible for higher jobs of extension officers and BDOs. In this connection, it has been suggested to the Government that experienced Gram Sevaks may be allowed to complete the advanced course in two years. I hope when this is achieved, it will be fair enough. After that Gram Sevaks will no longer feel handicapped in their further progress along the line high up.

New Delhi
2-9-60

Yours sincerely,
Farmer's Son.



This happened in a Village :

THE MIND CHANGES TOO

YOU HAVE often heard of villages making good progress, sometimes really amazing in various fields, such as agriculture, sanitation and education, etc. The Gram Sevak proudly recounts statistics which he has on his finger tips to prove his case. He will perhaps tell you that the food production in the village has increased by 40% as a result of good quality seeds, fertilisers and irrigation supplies. A primary school building and a Panchayat Ghar have been built largely through villagers' contribution. Besides, the streets have been paved. Even the village blacksmiths and carpenters have got their orientation in improved technology. All these things are there. What more do you want ?

But there comes the critic's voice: All this relates to material progress, the physical achievements ! What about the 'Man' himself, and the spirit of the village ? The psychological and sociological changes in the individual as well as the community are indeed a very slow and gradual process. It presents its own problems in implementation as well as assessment. However difficult and elusive this may be, it is taking place all the time whether we know it or not.

NO LOCK, NO THEFT

If you are keen to have perception of a change of this type, then go to village Kinnar Kheda in Porbander C.D. Block in Gujarat. Here you will find people going to collect the stamps they need from an unlocked box placed at the village crossing. The stamps in this box remain unlocked and so does the money. And there is no vigilance kept. People know the value of honesty. The Community Development programme has only pinpointed it. During the last two years, that is, ever since this experiment was launched, there has not been a single case of lapse on the part of any of the thousand and odd inhabitants of the village.

NO DISPUTE

It is also significant that during recent years not a single dispute has been referred to a court of law. Differences between the inhabitants have been resolved by the village panchayat. There has also been no case of theft or burglary. The farmers now leave even their agricultural implements in the open fields and find them the next day just as they had left them on the previous.

Untouchability has become a thing of the past and nobody in the vilage sincerely believes in caste or creed. Another important index of the change of outlook of the people is the fact that some of the orthodox customs, such as funeral feasts and child marriages, are fast dying out.

MAKING LITERATE

The village panchayat decided to make everyone in the village, man, woman or child, literate. The literacy drive was started on a large scale and today not one in the village is illiterate. Education opened up new avenues to the people. Books and magazines relating to developmental work elsewhere in the country, made available by various Government departments through the block development office, widened their horizon. They became conscious of their role in development work and were acquainted with the new ways being introduced to improve village economy.

The villagers have developed the real community spirit. There is a sense of oneness and cohesion that was unknown before. If the economic condition of a farmer or an artisan deteriorates, others come to his aid. It is a village where one stands for all and all for one.

FIRST FRUITS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN ANDHRA PRADESH

P. BALASUBRAHMANYAM

NINE MONTHS have elapsed since Panchayati Raj was initiated in Andhra Pradesh. Many eyes have been curiously watching this revolutionary transformation. Perhaps to hear the story from one engaged in it will interest the reader.

Democarcy in the village is the foundation of any democratic structure. Accordingly, prior to formation of Samitis, a net work of Panchayats was organised at the village level. This facilitated formation of Samitis at the block level followed by Zilla Parishads at District level. These corporate bodies operate independently within their respective orbits and at the same time in coordination with one another for the service of the "Man".

The dawn of November saw the birth of Panchayat Samitis. The pilotship was shifted to peoples' "man". In the very first round of elections, several educated young men were elected. These buoyant young men charged with enthusiasm set to work almost immediately. Standing committees which are the main business making bodies were formed soon (by election). Several Presidents began devoting full time attention to Samiti work.

STUPENDOUS CHALLENGE

These nascent bodies faced a stupendous challenge. Rightly or worngly, the people expected too much from them. They were charged with not merely the Community Development Programme. Elementary education with all its headaches was almost immediately transferred to them. Soon, one by one, the departments began transferring their functions. The block plan began to include all socio-economic activities in the block. This called for (*a*) planning initiated locally at the block and village levels and (*b*) coordination with plans of various departments being implemented in the block. While the responsibilities increased, the staff was not enhanced sufficiently due to paucity of experienced hands. Both officials and non-officials needed education. The transition period was pregnant with several obstacles. Critics averred everything will become static. Teachers were scared that they will not receive salaries. The delay in transfer of funds, the change-over to Local Fund system of accounts, the delay in the receipt of authorisation from Accountant General etc., looked like justifying the fears of the pessimists. But all these were only momentary. Soon the engine moved. Sympathetic consideration at all levels and the initiative of non-officials helped to tide over the initial setbacks. By February, 1960, things became normal. In fact, improved efficiency was visible in all spheres of activities. Pay and allowances of teacehrs began to be disbursed by the first week of every month. Ill-equipped elementary schools found themselves supplied with standard furniture. The rural dispensaries began purchasing medicines more easily. The auction of ferries, fairs, etc., even at the first instance has shown increased revenues. Elementary education has been generally toned up. Teachers have to be regular and punctual. Strength of school-going children has gone up. Increased popularity of improved seeds, greater demand for fertilisers and pesticides, a perennial demand for pedigree poultry are already in evidence. In fact these increased demands of rural folk already baffle the men at the helm of affairs. Ere long, the proverbial inertia enveloping our country folk, looks like breaking.

Perhaps a few words about officials may not be out of place. The role of Block Development Officer has undergone some change. He is now required to implement the decisions of the Samitis. He has to guide the Samiti and be its mentor. Though the initiative does not rest with him, he can make others take the initiative. His office work-load has increased. He continues to be the captain of the team. Perhaps in some cases, he has to humour the elected chief. But that is by the way. The block staff has

got to tour. Fictitious tour is automatically brought to light. Contact between the rural population and extension officers has increased considerably.

BALANCE RESTORED

Have there not been any brickerings or short-comings in this transition? True, there have been. But they represent minor things which will be healed with the passage of time. During the first few months, the erst-while powerful officers found it difficult to bow to the non-official. Then the misuse of the vehicle and with it the liberal expenditure on petrol has been a sore point. Favouritism in the matter of appointments and transfers and sometimes a partisan attitude in the matter of disbursement of loans might have been witnessed here and there. But the frequent tours of ministers and highly placed officials, the regional conferences of Samiti chiefs and Block Development Officers where criticism against these shortcomings has been voiced in a frank and outspoken manner, restore the balance. Doubtless, very soon, this rural development venture will gain acceleration and serve to bring about the Panchayati Raj of our dreams which is a precursor of Ram Raj in this state.

GLIMPSES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

(Continued from page 3)

the All India Cooperative Union has submitted a model piece of legislation for consideration of the Planning Commission.

To deny that the cooperative movement has made progress quantitatively as well as qualitatively during the last few years is to close one's eyes to facts. Since the first Five Year Plan was taken in hand, 75,000 societies have been organised. Almost all the States have taken steps to convert these primary societies into service Co-operatives and their field of service has now been considerably diversified. These societies are going to meet credit limits upto Rs. 190 crores by the end of the current year. The Mehta Committee Report has suggested some modifications in the pattern of advancing credit for credit worthy purposes rather than credit worthy persons. These recommendations are likely to be accepted and implemented in the near future as a result of which the weaker sections shall be enabled to stand on their feet. Co-operation, however is as much an economic proposition as it is a way of life. To build successful Co-operatives, we need to have a large army of workers who are not only equipped with sound knowledge in business transactions but have a living faith in the Cooperative principle of "one for all and all for one". This can be brought about largely through a process of training and education which is bound to be rather slow. A comprehensive system of training, partly by the Government and partly through the Non-official organisations is already under way. As regards the relaxation of Government control on the Cooperatives, there are no two opinions. The Government is equally keen to transfer the control to non-official organisations. The changeover is likely to be fraught with some errors and consequent mishaps. Therefore, great caution has to be exercised while switching over to the new pattern.

FROM GRAMSEVAK TO FARMER'S SON

(Continued from page 8)

Though I am a Government servant, I have ventured to write this letter to you not to accuse anybody, but only as an appeal stating how the real worker is not fully made use of and for suggesting how he may be helped to a certain extent. I fully hope you would do your best in this behalf.

You may experimentally try whether some experienced Gram Sevaks could be effectively put in charge of some Blocks. If they do not prove their worth they will not deserve that for which they have been pleading for.

Hope you would treat this, Sir, in good spirit and forgive this letter almost personally addressed to your esteemed self only from a Gram Sevak. But behind these lines there are noblest intentions.

With best regards,

Yours etc.

U. Mahabala Shetty,

N.E.S. Sullia

Gram Sevak

Bangalore,

23-6-60.

COMMUNITY ON THE MOVE

WOMEN EXCEL IN SHRAMDAN

WOMEN RESIDING in Chaudas Patti of the newly-created district of Pithoragarh in Uttar Pradesh bordering Tibet are not lagging behind male members of their area in the matter of execution of schemes aiming at welfare of their villages.

One of the biggest achievements of these women was in Sirkha and Rung villages of the Patti inhabited by 100 families where they have successfully completed a scheme to save their villages from growing menace of land erosion through Shramdan.

Sirkha and Rung villages were facing constant danger of being wiped out by the frequent occurrences of land erosion from different sides. The women launched a soil conservation scheme of their own accord and with their ceaseless efforts have succeeded in protecting their villages from the vagaries of nature. The women of these villages have also planted a community orchard in two acres of land.

The district authorities of Pithoragarh have completed the survey of the villages where land erosion occurs frequently. They have now decided to take suitable preventive measures. The scheme chalked out by the district authorities will be launched under the supervision of a PRD official who has returned to Pithoragarh after undergoing necessary training in soil conservation. Under the soil conservation scheme afforestation programme will be launched in the affected areas of the district.

JHANSI VILLAGERS' ENTERPRISE

An upsurge of mass enthusiasm for self-help project has led the villagers of Gora-Kalan, near Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh to construct a 108-foot long dam. Chronic poverty and water scarcity drove the villagers to desperation. They sought counsel with the district authorities to solve the problem of water scarcity which hit the cattle wealth most in summer.

The construction of a dam to conserve the abundant flow of water in a 'nallah' during the rainy season was decided upon. Cast in the mould of their heroic ancestors, 60 families of poor Ladhis inhabiting the village embarked upon the project. A sum of Rs. 3,000 was raised by subscription. They transported cement and other material in their bullock-carts to the site of the dam. Men and women trudged a distance of three furlongs to fetch water for the masonry work. Thanks to the unceasing toil and sweat of the brave villagers, the dam is now complete in all respects except that a sluice has to be fitted. This will be done after the rainy season as advised by the District Board engineer.

During the construction of the dam, the sight of an army of villagers doing the earth work to the accompaniment of songs of valour, was fascinating.

A MONUMENT TO LABOUR

Bareha village in Goshainganj development block in Uttar Pradesh has a monument to the people's voluntary labour. This monument is a huge structure erected in the heart of the village through the people's voluntary labour. It houses the panchayatghar which, together with the adjoining school building, was built at a cost of Rs. 16,000. The Lucknow District Board contributed Rs. 1,500 and the development block Rs. 2,500, the remaining amount being raised by the villagers themselves.

SHEKHPUR VILLAGE SETS AN EXAMPLE

The residents of Shekhpur village in Uttar Pradesh have set an example of sympathy and consideration for the less fortunate sections of the village community.

Recently they constructed a Panchayat Ghar through shramdan. When the project was completed, the villagers saw that they had a surplus supply of bricks. How could they best utilise these bricks? Here was an opportunity to do their bit for a resourceless widow in the village. They, therefore, decided to construct a house for her.

And now her house stands in Shekhpur, a monument to the resolve of the village to care for its weak.

EXPERIMENT IN GRAM PARIWAR

Village Gawasen in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra is presently engaged in carrying out an experiment in Community living known as 'Gram Pariwar'. The entire community is being looked upon as one family.

Some 16 families have joined in the movement. Of these, ten families had lands and the rest were landless. All the land in the possession of the land owning families was pooled together and it was decided to take up common cultivation on that land. They also pooled their resources in cattle and implements. Formerly, a boy or girl from every family had to go out everyday for cattle-grazing. Now only two persons look after the entire flock of the village on the grazing ground and they perform this routine quite satisfactorily. Consequently, the youngsters have now started attending the village school. For agricultural operations also more hands are now available. A feeling of brotherhood has grown and the villagers are now delighted at finding a practical way for their social and economic advancement.

These people have welded and unified their whole economic life. They purchase their weekly requirements wholesale. Formerly each family used to purchase its requirements separately from the weekly bazar. Now one or two persons are deputed and they make purchases for the 'gram pariwar'. This has led to lot of saving in money as well as time.

The movement is gathering momentum in the village. Even some white-collar people have discarded their old notions of intellectual superiority and have begun working in the fields along with the others.

Last year the fear of exhausting all the grain by the sowing time was always present. The money-lenders were not going to advance them any loans as they were against this new experiment which, they feared, might, in all probability, oust them from their exploitative calling. They would only be too glad to see the innovation fail miserably. But a sympathetic man of means gave a loan of Rs. 500 for the purchase of seed and this facilitated their cultivation to an extent that the produce this year increased 50 per cent.

The 'gram pariwar' has even registered itself under the name of Shri Gram Swarajya Society. People of the village have chalked out their Five Year Plan with the help of some economists, especially for the development of agriculture and village industries. Steps have already been taken for the promotion of Ambar spinning and adult education.

A SELF-RELIANT VILLAGE

Patund, a tiny village with a population of 40 families, situated near Kashi in Uttar Pradesh has taken a number of steps to improve the economic condition of the village. Lying 6,000 feet above sea level in a hilly area north of Kashi, this village has set up a fine example of team work.

That there has been no litigation for the last 45 years in this village, speaks volumes for the unity in the village. Other works completed by the villagers of Patund are also noteworthy. Five years ago, the villagers laid a fruit garden for the village on the three-acre piece of land. They constructed pucca nalis and a water tank for irrigating it. They have planted more than 700 apricot and apple trees on this land. The garden is protected by a five foot high stone wall. The management of this garden is entrusted to the Gram Sahakari Samiti—village cooperative.

Compared to the neglected government jungle lands, the undeveloped land of the village is well maintained. The women folk of the village, after finishing work on their own farms; go to this land to cut grass. They work on the land collectively for cutting grass.

Patund is the first village in this area to have a co-operative samiti. There are two women members on the managing committee of the Samiti.

NEWS FROM STATES

DELHI

THE DELHI ADMINISTRATION is to accelerate its programme to build up a cadre of trained workers to man the increasing number of co-operative societies in the Union Territory.

The Delhi Co-operative Council has decided to set aside a sum of over Rs. 1.27 lakhs for the expansion of existing training facilities.

The programme aims at training over 1,00,000 co-operative workers during the next few years and at least 12,000 by April, 1961.

Of the total expenditure to be incurred on the training programme, a sizable percentage will be devoted to secure trained staff for the existing as well as the new institutions that are proposed to be set up. The salaries of the staff alone are expected to cost Rs. 30,000 per annum.

A sum of Rs. 20,000 is to be spent on study tours for trainees and staff and another Rs. 12,000 on providing adequately stocked libraries.

Among the proposals under consideration is one for a complete decentralization of the training programme by the establishment of a chain of institutions—one for every block—in addition to a central institute.

* * *

MADHYA PRADESH

THE VILLAGE PANCHAYATS of Raghurajnagar tahsil of Satna district spent a total of Rs. 56,662 out of their income over construction of 17 school buildings, three Veterinary hospitals, two recreation centres, three cattle pounds and 15 wells, renovation of three tanks and 17 roads and various other development works during the year 1959-60. In addition, 1,600 soakage and 2,675 compost pits were also dug by these Panchayats and 8,000 adults were educated. These Panchayats also arranged 120 village Melas and 20 exhibitions in the villages during the reported period.

* * *

Members of the Youth Club of village Panchdah, situated in Khairagarh Block of Durg district in Madhya Pradesh set in inspiring example for others by planting 80 fruit trees in the village Saloni, the members of Youth Club have started an adult literacy centre for educating the grown-ups of the village. They have also planted fruit trees in every house of the village.

During the first quarter of the current year, 30 Youth Clubs functioned in the Block area with a total membership of 600 people. These clubs hold regular meetings. They discuss village development schemes and try to implement them successfully.

* * *

With a view to establishing a model colony of scheduled castes in Sehore and Raisen Districts in Madhya Pradesh, a sum of Rs. 60,000 has been sanctioned under Centrally Sponsored Programme of Welfare of Scheduled Castes during the current financial year. Under the scheme, 55 houses in Raisen and 25 in Sehore Districts will be constructed before March 31, 1961. Each beneficiary of the scheme will get Rs. 750, provided he contributes Rs. 250 in the form of cash, kind or free labour for the construction of the house.

ORISSA

530 LARGE SIZED Co-operative Societies in Orissa covering over 8,600 villages with a population of 25,12 lakhs are now functioning in Orissa State. Of these 350 have received Government share capital.

Out of the total loan advanced, 38 per cent that is Rs. 20.5 lakhs was for short-term and the rest medium term loan. The highest amount 43 per cent of the total loan was issued to the small and medium cultivators raising the quantum of loan from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300. This indicates that the small cultivators were mainly benefited by these societies.

* * *

The State Government has drawn up a detailed scheme for multiplication of green manure seeds, and the green manuring programme for the kharif 1960-61. The scheme envisages periphery plantations by all cultivators for green manuring all their lands without affecting the cropping pattern.

USEFUL TIPS

BREEDING WORK ON RICE

YOU WILL BE interested to know that as a result of experiments carried over a number of years on breeding work for rice cultivation under special conditions, several improved varieties have been developed. You can select any out of these according to your needs. In Andhra Pradesh, some varieties have been developed from Indica-Japoncia crosses. These give 50% higher yields Variety No: 1311 has been found to withstand for more than two months, submergence under 5 feet of water. It has given a yield of 2,208 lbs. per acre as against 500 lbs. per acre from the local variety.

Two varieties *viz.* C 72—C 87, developed at Masulipatam in Andhra Pradesh are salt resistant and are significantly superior to the local varieties.

In Andhra Pradesh and Madras, Strain No: 6522 can resist blast. Two other strains, 6538 (in Madras) and 6517 in (Andhra Pradesh) also exhibit good amount of resistance.

GUAR AS CASH CROP

The Punjab farmer knows the value of GUAR as a good fodder crop to be grown in the dry farming areas. To the South Indian farmer, it is a good vegetable crop to be grown under irrigation in kitchen garden.

What is not generally known is that guar seeds have a good demand in the U.S.A. They use the outer coat of the seed for preparing various grades of gums. A type of flour is also prepared from seed. The gums and the flour have great uses in food, paper and the textile industries, and hence the demand for the seeds is on the rise in that country.

Since guar comes up well both in the Kharif and Rabi seasons, there is a good scope for producing and exporting guar seed and gums.

The variety C.P. 78 has given the highest yield of 600 pounds of seed per acre. This is suitable for growing in the South.

BLOAT—RAINY SEASON'S CATTLE DISEASE

During and after the monsoon, farm animals commonly suffer from bloat. Animals get this disease by feeding on flush pastures and grasses. Watering the animals after they have been feeding on wet leguminous or other juicy fodders, only quickens bloat. If the gas is not removed quickly in such cases, the animals fall down and die. Do not delay attending to your animal in such cases. Make a quick effort to relieve it of the pressure of gases. This you can do by massaging the rumen by exerting pressure through its left flank, or by rubbing turpentine oil in its flank area or making the animal move about actively. The gases can also be got out of the rumen by passing a rope round the animal's body and tightening it, pulling its tongue forward in the mouth or by fixing a wooden gag between its jaws.

As a first aid measure, give one or two ounces of turpentine oil mixed with one or two pounds of linseed oil. After a few hours, follow with a saline purgative like half a pound of magnesium sulphate and half a pound of common salt. Give asafoetida or powdered charcoal to check further fermentation in the stomach. Withhold all food till the acute stage is over, and give water to the animal in small quantities only.

A Cattle Feed

Many farmers use whole cotton-seed for feeding their cattle. They prefer the seed to cotton-seed cake. They think that the seed is better than the cake, in food value, and that the cows fed with cotton-seed, yield more milk than those fed with cotton-seed cake.

The belief is not true. Though whole cotton-seed is rich in fat, most of it is not digested by cattle and is thus wasted. It has been shown that cotton-seed cake has as good a feeding value as whole cotton-seed. It can be given to bullocks as much as to cows. It is better digested than the seed by cattle. It is also cheaper than the seed. Besides, the cake has no bad effects on the health of cattle or on the work or milk they produce.

Panchayati Raj scheme has brought about a new awakening in rural India. Even Adivasis, who till the other day lead an isolated life are now involved in it. Like their brethren in the plains they are showing avid interest in the development of their villages. The picture above shows the Adivasis of a village under Rajpur Block in Madhya Pradesh discussing the village development programme with their Mukhiya.

Villagers under Community Development Project, Jangipur, near Murshidabad are reinforcing the river emba[illegible]nti-flood measure activities become brisk in rural West Bengal before [illegible] of Monsoon. Long before the rains set in villagers in large number turn out to strengthen the bunds and embankments and thus insure their hearths and homes against the ravages of possible floods.

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